

Lake Erie

Walleye

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The Complete Fishing Scene on Lake Erie

Coverage of the Western, Central & Eastern Basins

Fall 2001

The 2001 Perch Report

Fall Perchin' Erie's Central Basin

Lake Erie Walleye Migrations

Erie's Fall Walleye Bonanza

Lake Erie Fall Fishing is Fantastic

Fall Walleye Tactics

Suspended Fall Walleyes

Proven Smallmouth Lures & Presentations

The Eastern Lake Erie Report



Plus:

Walleye News & Fact File
New Fishing Boats
Charter Fishing Information

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Professional Walleye Fisherman and Author, Mark Martin, with a trophy walleye taken from Lake Erie in 2001. Lake Erie is still the "Walleye Capital of the World"

From The Editor

The date of this writing is September 12th, 2001, the day after. It's difficult for me to focus on the task at hand, as you can imagine, given what happened just yesterday. The Terrorist hijackings of our commercial airliners, the attack and destruction of the World Trade Center Buildings and the Pentagon, the loss of thousands of US lives, have left me, like most of us, shocked, full of grief and with feelings of rage and anger toward whoever planned and implemented these attacks on the US.

As I think about and pray for the thousands lost, and their loved ones I also pray that our leaders take quick and decisive action against these terrorists and all world terrorists. I believe our nation will rise up and become even stronger than before. Our freedom has a long legacy and it will continue, despite the terrorist attempts by others to diminish it.

This time has given me a chance to reflect on all that is good in our country and the true freedom we enjoy as citizens. I have vowed to myself to **NEVER** again take for granted the simple things that are our rights: Reading the daily paper, filled with thoughts and opinions of others; Going to work (for myself, not for some regime or dictatorship government) and earning a living to support my family; Attending religious services when and where I choose; recreating and enjoying my hobbies, such as fishing on Lake Erie. We are a fortunate people!

Back to the task at hand. This past spring and summer has seen some of the best walleye fishing in

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Lake Erie Walleye

Rick Kubb, Editor/Publisher

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Walleye News and Fact File

Rebuilding Walleye Populations in Lake Erie

For years, anglers could load their gear, head for the Lake, and expect to catch 6 to 10 walleyes without a problem. Lake Erie was an angler's dream and a local economy's delight with over 3 million walleye consistently harvested each year in the mid-1980's.

Because of ideal weather conditions, the 1980's symbolized the pinnacle of walleye productivity in Lake Erie. Low winds kept nests undisturbed and mild springs permitted faster incubation and growth periods for the walleye. Severe winters caused some exotics and walleye predators to die. These weather factors along with ample numbers of walleye spawners produced record walleye hatches in the 1980's. Ohio anglers were delighted.

But as the decade expired, so did the walleye numbers. High winds and strong water currents disturbed smallmouth bass and walleye nests, decreasing numbers of young. Predatory fish like white bass, catfish, and white perch continued to compete with and consume walleye fry and eggs, impacting recruitment. The introduction of aquatic nuisance species such as the zebra mussel, round goby, and spiny waterflea, also added stress to the walleye by altering the ecosystem's equilibrium. Invading the Lake, these species altered the structure of planktonic communities by consuming food needed for walleye and other sports fish. Increased water clarity caused by phos

Lake Erie Walleye Action Was HOT this Summer

Lake Erie is maintaining its title as the Walleye Capital of the World. This past summer both the weather and the fish cooperated. Local walleye anglers are touting this year as the best fishing season in a decade, according to Ohio Department of Natural Resources (ODNR) Division of Wildlife.

“Overall, the walleye fishing has been very good this year, beginning with some excellent ice fishing last winter and pre-spawn fishing on the reefs and in Maumee Bay. Fishing in the western basin has really heated up since mid-June, especially along the Toledo Shipping Channel,” said Roger Knight, supervisor of ODNR’s Lake Erie Fisheries Unit in Sandusky. “Fishing success is affected by many factors and this year, many of the right factors are coming together.” Disappointing walleye fishing for many Lake Erie anglers for the past two summers was attributed to poor weather, an abundance of bait fish in the lake and lack of a large spawning class entering the fishery. This year, walleyes from an excellent spawn in 1999, now measuring 14 to 16 inches, are adding significantly to the fishery. Anglers are filling coolers with a mixed bag of walleyes ranging in length from 14 to 30 inches.

Fishing from private boats, charter boats and “walk-on” charters (larger boats that can accommodate up to 50 people) have all been successful, with many reporting limit catches, often in just two or three hours of fishing. The hot spots are concentrated west of the islands to the Michigan state line.

“Lake Erie gained its national reputation throughout the 1980s due largely to reef fishing in June and July. The lake was ideal walleye habitat, with moderately turbid waters that allowed walleyes to be active throughout the day. Moreover, record numbers of fish were present in the walleye population. Yet, walleye fishing was generally over for most anglers by mid-August,” Knight said. “But since the 1980s, water clarity has increased, walleye abundance has declined to a moderate level, and walleye feeding behavior has changed. Walleye schools tend to be distributed in patches and anglers often have to search for these

schools to be successful.”

To compensate for these changes, walleye anglers have adopted new tackle and fishing methods. Weight-forward spinners that were once the rage of Lake Erie anglers are now just another lure in the walleye angler’s tackle box. Worm harnesses, mayfly rigs, small spoons, and crankbaits are now equally popular baits.

“While casting is preferred by many anglers, our data clearly show that trolling produces more fish per hour expended, probably because trollers cover more water and are more likely to encounter an active school of fish. Walleye anglers should not give up on late summer and fall fishing, as we have observed high catch rates in late-August through October in recent years.”

Some of the recent hot spots include the area between the Toledo Shipping Channel and the Michigan state line, West Sister Island area, south of Middle Sister Island in Ohio waters, C and B Cans, the Reef Complex and north of Niagara Reef.

The legal bag limit for walleyes on the Ohio waters of Lake Erie is six from May through February, and four during March and April.

Most anglers are fishing for walleyes, but Lake Erie also provides excellent fishing for yellow perch, smallmouth bass and white bass.

A fishing report is available by calling 1-888-HOOK FISH (1-888-466-5347). Callers in the local Sandusky exchange should call 625-3187.

Despite the current trend in lower-than-average water levels on Lake Erie, all ODNR fishing and boat access facilities are open and fully operational at this time. However, boat anglers are reminded to follow navigational charts.

Cormorant Update

Populations of double-crested cormorants have exploded in the eastern half of the United States due to improved water quality in the Great Lakes and catfish fanning in the south, which allows for greater winter survival of the birds. But this federally-protected, deep-diving water bird is wearing out its welcome with sportfishing groups across the Great Lakes that fear cormorants are depleting key sport fish stocks.

Lake Erie researchers, as well as those on other Great Lakes, have determined that cormorants are very opportunistic. That is, they consume prey fish that are most readily available. Researchers have found that the primary diet of cormorants on western Lake Erie is freshwater drum and baitfish (gizzard shad and emerald shiners), while walleye, smallmouth bass, and yellow perch are seldom consumed.

ODN-R Division of Wildlife biologists are closely monitoring colonies of cormorants on West Sister, East Sister, and Middle Sister islands in Lake Erie for habitat destruction and nesting competition with wading birds. Over time, the cormorants' ammonia-rich guano can kill low-growing vegetation used by other nesting birds. West Sister Island is a crucial nesting site for black-crowned night herons, great egrets, and great blue herons. In fact, the island supports the largest colonies of these wading birds on the Great Lakes.

The U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service has been issuing depredation permits in 13 states (not Ohio) for the limited killing of cormorants to protect fisheries. The Service is currently developing a regional plan to control growing populations of cormorants that are harming fish and wildlife populations. Measures may include egg oiling, egg addling, and nest removal.

Lake Erie Fishermen
Find up-to-date fishing reports at
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years. I won't go as far as some who have compared it to the heydays of the 1980s, but it was good. The best fishing was in the western basin and the central basin. Eastern basin anglers found walleyes more difficult to come by (see Joe Fischer's Eastern Lake Erie Report).

Smallmouth Bass fishing and perch fishing in late summer have also been fantastic. The early indications for the fall perch season are very promising. Many limits reported (and a few in my boat too!).

Many dedicated anglers are looking forward to the late fall walleye bite off of Huron, Ohio. The fishing there in recent years has been incredible, all the way up to late November. Whether from boat, pier or shoreline, night anglers likely will have a lot of fun in the coming weeks off of Huron. Walleyes, be on your guard!

In this fall issue of the magazine we again (has it been 6 years already?) report on the annual status of the Yellow Perch fishery in Lake Erie with lots of statistics and numbers, for those that care for that kind of stuff. We also have several articles on perch, walleye and smallmouth fishing, with emphasis on fall fishing. These have been contributed by some of the best fishermen to tread Lake Erie Waters including Bud Riser, Michael Veine, Ted Takasaki, Mark Martin, Mark Hicks and others. Enjoy and till next time, continued good fishing!

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